



Sert's mural showing man's conquest of disease.

WHO, the Catalyst in International Health

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WE ARE MEETING here for the next 2 or 3 weeks in a room which is one of the great rooms of the world—the Council Room of the Palais des Nations—a room in which history has been and will progressively be made.

All of us are inspired and uplifted, as we carry on the business before us, in studying

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the murals by the great Spanish artist, Sert, which surround us. They are to me, as I study them, a record of man's emergence from the primitive. One of our opportunities and privileges is to carry that emergence further along.

We are all aware of the technological ascent represented in the small panel on the right. The rapidity of this ascent indeed underlies many of the problems of our times.

The panel in front of us typifies war and the horrors of war and the triumph of war and the complete distress of war. And here also is man's emergence from bondage. Directly above us is represented man's intellectual progress and the use of reason in cementing nations together in peace.

Over here, on the other side, we see man climbing up in the field of health—our field—man emerging to better things in health and so

cial well-being. It is particularly important to us to recognize that this panel, which represents disease and man's conquest of disease, is included as part of the whole which symbolizes man's progress toward peace.

Man cannot make progress, cannot emerge to the fullness of his development, carrying a great burden of disease. We have the opportunity to do something about it—that is what we are here for. It is a very unusual opportunity. There are very few men in our profession who have the opportunity to serve on the Executive Board of the World Health Organization—just a handful through a generation of public health progress.

As we enter our deliberations, we should do so with proper solemnity and thoughtfulness. It is proper that we keep in mind, in the light of the Sert panel symbolizing man's freedom from disease, the central significance of health in our work. It is in the title of our organization. It is included in the WHO constitution as our central objective. I think we can recognize that health is a good thing in itself—that there does not need to be any other excuse for health than health itself and what it does in giving scope and range to the mind and the spirit of man.

The Setting for 1955

We are fortunate that in directing our efforts at health we are obtaining certain secondary effects, as byproducts, in economic and social advancement that are essential to total progress toward peaceful and decent living. We all know that we cannot have security in the world—we cannot have peace—without sufficient food for all people, adequate shelter, health, and I think particularly, an ever-widening horizon of opportunity. Man's emergence in technology, intellect, and spirit, which is so dramatically pictured in this room, must continue to provide the ever-widening horizon of opportunity.

Man's emergence is a relatively short story. It was only some 20,000 years ago that he stepped forth from his primeval state and began using tools. Progressively he freed himself from the all-encompassing hunt for food,

through the development of planting and the domestication of animals.

The period of his great technological development is a span of only some 4,000 years. It is the familiar story that begins in the Indus Valley, China, Mesopotamia, the Nile, and the Mediterranean. Through the period of technological emergence, there was constant groping for something deeper and more significant. In the millennium marked in midpoint by the beginning of the Christian era occurred the great flowering of the intellect and the spirit. This remarkable millenium included the classical period of Greece with its philosophers and the great moral and spiritual leaders of mankind—the Hebrew prophets, Zoroaster, Confucius, Lao-tse, Buddha, Christ, and Mohammed. It was the period of emergence of spirit and thought.

On the slate of history man seemed to go backwards for awhile, but a resurgence of cultural and intellectual development took place here in Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries. Later came the remarkable intellectual thirst of the 17th century which we see continuing today in the development of new concepts of the universe. That is indeed directly related to the work of this session of the Executive Board. The work of Newton and Galileo led to Einstein and to our present agenda, which includes an item dealing with atomic energy. This new source of power, instead of being a further step in man's emergence, can, if mishandled by you and me and by our generation, be the instrument of man's destruction—his final emergence to his own end.

This is the setting in which we find ourselves dealing in 1955 with the problem of health among men. It is appropriate that as we do so we pause to take a brief look at where our organization stands.

The history of the World Health Organization is an exceedingly brief one. We can find great cause for satisfaction in this history. In 9 years those of us who have had occasion to watch WHO have seen it grow from nothing to real greatness. It has attained stature as one of the great forces among men for good. It has become, on the world scene, a symbol for all that is best in international life: sympathetic under-



The Executive Board of the World Health Organization, January 1955.

standing among men; faith in the worthwhileness of the individual; helpfulness, one to the other, without regard to false criteria; and man's full development of body, mind, and spirit.

Probably all of you who have studied the proposed annual WHO program and budget for 1956 (Official Records of the World Health Organization No. 58) have been impressed by the breadth of the work of this Organization, by how it has reached into the remotest corners of the world to places whose names even are new to you and me, despite the fact that we have traveled widely. As one reads the document, one obtains a sense of the reality of the fact that our colleagues, under the leadership of this body and our Director-General, are in myriads of places carrying on the very human work of the world.

Our regional directors, who are with us during this meeting, are closer to these problems than any of us, and they and their personnel are reaching the masses of the people. As a result the World Health Organization is better known to the millions of people in the less privileged areas of the world than any other international agency except perhaps FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) and our fellow agency UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). I am sure that WHO is known and treasured in the hearts of persons to whom the political bodies of the United Nations are remote and incomprehensible unrealities, if indeed they are known at all.

It is encouraging that at the other end of the scale, in the cold and highly critical areas of science, the reputation of the Organization also stands secure. The world's greatest experts in

the medical sciences serve the World Health Organization with pride and readiness on its expert panels and expert committees. There was a recent example of the effect of the reputation of WHO in scientific circles, when, within a matter of a few days, the Director-General was able to bring to Geneva from great distances leading experts and authorities on the medical and biological aspects of atomic energy. There was no question about what WHO was, or where it stood, or what its reputation was. These men responded to the call of WHO immediately. I have seen some of our WHO monographs referred to by critics in responsible journals as classics in their field. In 9 years, to have produced classics in fields of health which are thousands of years old is a great accomplishment and is further testimony to the quality of the scientific work of the Organization.

I might say that in the field of administration also, WHO need bow to no other organization on the international scene. It provides a splendid demonstration of competent public administration in the highly complex environment characteristic of international life. I have had the privilege of working with your Standing Committee on Administration and Finance, and once again I have been tremendously impressed by the quality of the work done in budget planning and preparation and in the fiscal, financial, and administrative management of our organization. I am sure that when you review the reports coming forward from the standing committee, you will share my admiration.

Where the World Health Organization stands now, in these various respects, is indeed a vindication of the concept of the specialized agency within the United Nations framework. WHO is a triumphant example of the wisdom of the men in San Francisco who provided for this type of technical organization within the broad framework of the great political structure they created.

International Leadership

Now, I would like to say something for a moment about WHO and what its proper place is, as I see it, in the public health scene of the world. It is the leader, the stimulator, the catalyst in public health. The object of a local

health department is to mobilize and guide the total resources of the community toward the improvement of health. The local health department stimulates the department of education, the department of public works, the many voluntary agencies in the community, the associations, the clubs—all resources in the community—focusing them on the solution of the health problems of that community.

The World Health Organization, the directing and coordinating authority in international health work, as defined in its constitution, serves in this same stimulating leadership role on the world scene. It gives direction and leadership to the development of world health, and in so doing mobilizes all the available resources whether they are within the organization or are within the other specialized agencies, within the United Nations itself, within the voluntary agencies, or within the regional or national agencies devoted to social and economic development.

The annual report of the Director-General every year lists an amazing number of significant conferences in which WHO participates. Through such activity WHO influences many organizations to carry on health work and devote their resources to the solution of health problems which are pertinent to our organization and so stimulates great activity which otherwise would not take place. Further, you are all familiar with the technical conferences organized by WHO, the interregional and regional conferences that it has held on problems such as malaria and yaws, bringing all resources within large areas of the world to bear upon specific health problems.

It is heartening to see also the role that the World Health Organization is playing in regard to some of the bilateral programs of cooperation. It is my privilege to be familiar with the bilateral program of the United States of America, which, as many of you know, is a technical assistance program carried out in cooperation with a number of governments, and which has the same health objectives as the World Health Organization. The relationship between WHO and this program has avoided the pitfalls of possible conflict or duplication to become a truly intimate association with close integration of programs. This has



The Council Room of the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

greatly enhanced the value of both programs but particularly has contributed effectively and continuously to the total development of health in the countries where these programs are assisting in the development of national health activities.

I might cite just an example of how the World Health Organization is exerting its leadership. Many of you will remember that 2 years ago, here in Geneva, the leaders of WHO and of the bilateral program of the United States of America—the Technical Co-operation Administration as it then was—met together in a joint session and discussed objectives. That meeting had a tremendous influence on the course that has been taken by that program. Last year, a similar meeting was held in Panama, covering the Latin America area. At the moment, plans are going forward for a joint meeting of the WHO leadership and the chiefs of the United States bilateral health staffs in some 18 countries in

Africa and Asia. The meeting will be held in New Delhi and will consider common problems and common goals of the two programs.

In such ways as this, WHO is giving of its great knowledge and exerting leadership in all health programs that are being carried on at the international level. In no other place is there the concentration of knowledge concerning world health problems that there is in WHO.

A Balanced Health Program

We have already said something about the relationship of disease and health to the economy. Dr. C.-E. A. Winslow in his WHO monograph, *The Cost of Sickness and the Price of Health* (WHO Monograph Series, No. 7), presented this relationship with great clarity in a document which is among the classics produced by this Organization.

We must move forward in this field and give

our strength and our assistance to the programs of the United Nations in technical assistance for economic development. It is appropriate that when the United Nations has a program directed at economic development and recognizes the need for doing something about health as absolutely basic to that development, we should play an active role and give of our strength and our friendship to that program—not as a supplemental program in health but as an economic program of which health is an integral part.

We all know of the interest that people and their governments have in children: that they have opened their hearts and purses at this time in history to give special help. We, of course, have a keen interest in children, and we have the opportunity of doing special work for children in connection with UNICEF.

Interagency relationships are always complex: They are never entirely smooth. Certainly at the national level we have problems, all of us around the table, with other agencies within our own governments. And, I am sure, they have their problems with us. It is not strange that at the world level, which is even more complex, there should be occasional ripples on the surface. All we need do is to keep our high and total objective always before us—to remind ourselves of our ultimate goal, which is the progress of health.

I believe that we can handle these relationships with no real difficulty if we keep our sights sufficiently high. We must, of course, keep a balanced public health program. We are the agency responsible for total public health progress, and the Seventh World Health Assembly (1954) in its resolution on UNICEF

particularly pointed out the need for us to keep that balance. We must be sure that we do not deflect our central resources too far away from our central objective in giving assistance to other organizations. That is a matter of judgment and wisdom which this board is expected to exercise.

During this session we shall be dealing with these matters, and it will be a great opportunity for us, as individuals. We shall be getting better acquainted. I wish to welcome the new members who are among us. I am sure that in a few days we shall all be good personal friends and, at the end of our deliberations, very warm, firm, and permanent friends. That has been the experience of the board, and that is the spirit in which we do our business. Also, we shall have a chance to become acquainted with our great Director-General, with members of his staff, and, when we are particularly fortunate, with their families.

At this point I wish to pay a special tribute, if I may, to the WHO officials and their families. They have in my view the greatness of spirit that allows separations and personal sacrifices and even encounters with danger in the work that means so much to all men in the world.

So I might close by pointing out that the World Health Organization is a team of dedicated people and by expressing the hope that our visit here—yours and mine—may help to strengthen the Organization in its great work. We can be sure, as we settle down to the work in hand, that few undertakings can provide fuller opportunities than does WHO for the peaceful advancement of mankind.

